

Claremont Immersion School
PTA General Membership Meeting
May 3rd, 2016

PTA President Introduction: Amber Dungan

The meeting began by welcoming Steven Bernheisel, the assistant director of maintenance services for APS. He explained that he received many requests of concern and for action towards the improvement of the CIS playground area. He agrees that the concerns are valid, and explained that APS will try to make improvements to playground. Operating funds are not used to do anything like this, but instead 'minor construction/major maintenance funds' are used, as well as field funds.

He detailed the concerns involved, including the large number of children using equipment, and soil improvement. About 1 year ago, some drainage improvements were made to what he referred to as Area 1 (the area adjacent to the relocatable classrooms).

The county will be working to repair the worn areas and settled soil, as well as to mitigate the exposed manhole covers (rubber mats will be placed on top of the steel manhole covers). All of the worn areas will get sod- Bermuda sod will be used as it is hearty and able to withstand the conditions. Area 2 (which is closest to the exit to the field) will be mulched and picnic tables will be installed. Trees will also be added. Area 4 (adjacent to the kindergarten classrooms) will expand, and will be a larger play area with mulch- this will give the sod a chance to get established. Area 3 (adjacent to the tool shed) will get sod as well. The water fountain by the mini park will be fixed as well.

The area adjacent to the relocatable classrooms is always damp, and so was sampled to make sure that it is not sewage. It was also sampled as to whether it was treated drinking water. Because this issue is not high on the priority list and was found to not be sewage water, it will be addressed later.

Susie Wallin: Executive Board elections

The PTA is required by its by-laws to have an election. Susie presented the slate below, and asked for nominations on the floor.

President-elect: Melissa Schwaber.
Treasurer: Beth Addington
Fundraising: Amber Dungan
Membership: Lyzbeth Monard
Communications: Marjorie Araya
Social- Melania Saraniero

Education and Green Initiates- Amy Oldham
Secretary- Maggie Colston

Bill Gillen moved that we accept the slate, and Kelly Harvey seconded. There were no nominations from the floor. The slate was approved by a voice vote.

Susie also mentioned that they are still recruiting for committee chairs as well, and details will be coming out soon.

Next, two teachers were present to speak to the PTA- Senorita Bermudez and Lua, both 5th grade teachers. They spoke about the importance of having classroom libraries in both English and Spanish languages. When they became teachers at the school, one of the hardest things they found was that there were not as many Spanish books in their classroom libraries. Now, they are able to hold book clubs. This allows students to discuss what they're reading in Spanish. However, they still need more books in different levels and in different genres, because the students need choices. Those choices are important so that children can find books in subjects that they like in Spanish. With the addition of extra books, they can now provide more time for the students to just read. Not only has it changed the way they teach reading, but now the students are excited to pick books.

The 5th graders just took the STAMP test which is normally taken in 5th grade, and their results were the best ever. Most students scored about the average level.

The teachers also spoke about professional development, and that it is great way to support the teachers- there are new techniques coming out regularly, as well as conferences that help teachers improve their skills. Often their ability to participate is limited due to resources.

A third teacher, Samantha Kirch, spoke to the group as well. She teaches on English side. She explained that they are fortunate, as they can find books in English and Spanish. The 3rd grade students love reading, and it is very encouraging to have students approach the teachers asking for books they want to read. However, they always need more books.

Jessica Panfil then explained that they classroom libraries consist of books that are housed in the classroom, and they are important because the teachers are able to guide the students' choices through these books. They consist of CIS funded books as well as teachers' collections. If a teacher were to leave CIS, they would take their books with them. The school's goal is to have 500 books in every classroom. Some of the more experienced teachers have 600 to 700 books in their classroom, which is a testament to their dedication to having a library of books.

Treasurer: Beth Addington

Beth explained that the 3rd quarter report was sent out. The PTA has funded \$20K toward student programs. \$4200 was spent on events and supplies that benefit both the teachers and supplies.

We are currently operating under the formerly approved September budget. Beth stated that she examined all of the line items with remaining funds. For example, the Fall Fun Fest has remaining money, but it will not be expensed for the rest of the year. The total estimated expenses come to \$20,500, and our available income is \$36,000 – these are funds available for this school year. We are suggesting that we take a round number of \$16K to spend. The Read-a-thon was the largest fundraiser CIS had this year, and in the proposed budget our carryover is lower than it has been in past years.

The vote on the changes to the budget was approved by the general membership, and the budget will be amended to include these changes.

Fundraising: Melissa Schwaber

Melissa explained that Jessica surveyed the staff as to what they think the funds should be spent on. Three areas came out as winners: outdoor space, books (for classrooms and books in general), and teacher development.

The current approach is to put \$14K towards books, and \$2K towards professional development.

A question was asked about buying in bulk, and whether that has been explored. Jessica explained that when classrooms libraries are planned, books are purchased in bulk and with variety built into their packages from publishers and in recommended titles. Another question was asked as to whether CIS works with other schools? APS works with proposed vendors who work with us to get the best discount. However, we get the same amount of funding as single language schools so it is more challenging to stock up on books.

Another question was raised, asking if we send teachers to professional development, will the teachers go back to share that information with the other teachers. Jessica answered that teachers have two meetings a month that they attend, but since CIS has moved towards more professional learning, they share that on a monthly basis with other teachers. She believes that if you are supporting teachers, then they will want to stay at CIS.

Another point was raised as to whether classrooms will be stocked with a number of books proportionate to their current stock. Jessica will check as to how they are going to be distributed. Stocking up the libraries will be a long term goal for the school.

Another point discussed was that vendors sometimes offer translated books without the best translations. SantiAna is a Spanish book company that has wonderful books that are not poorly translated. The librarian is researching and looking for more authentic text versus translated text. CIS would like the balance to slant towards authentic text. Also, the books will get stickers, so that people know which books were purchased that came from the PTA funds. Someone asked what the proportion of English to Spanish books purchased will be. The answer was that it will be more Spanish books for now. Jessica and the staff will decide where all of these books go – they may not be spread across classrooms exactly the same.

Another attendee said that it is sad that we cannot pay for anything like travel and hotel for the teachers when they travel to conferences. Two teachers will attend the technology conference, and Jessica will speak to Beth about how they can support their lodging.

The staff is working on setting up an Amazon wish list.

Another comment was raised as to whether APS is aware of the school's lack of books. Jessica answered that the issue about books is widely known within APS and the School Board. It is a delicate issue around the funding and what it takes to stock up on double the number of books.

Someone asked if we could send teachers with a list of wanted books before they go to Spanish speaking country- the answer is yes, we can. Another comment was whether we could propose some sort of deal with the Spanish Embassy, that could help us get better Spanish books, and maybe help us reach out to companies there that could provide them. Also, what about connecting with other Spanish immersion schools in the area? Melissa explained that she has spoken with other North Arlington PTAs, and they have extra books. Some other PTAs are looking for a school to benefit like ours. However, they usually like to advertise that they are helping Title 1 schools, but she is still looking.

Amber stated that will now vote on dedicated the funding to spend 14K towards books, and 2K towards professional development. Emily Greco moved to accept, and Bill Gillen seconded.

Capacity: Bill Gillen

Bill first spoke of the past advocacy for CIS's capacity issues, and that it has hurt CIS because we have spoken with multiple voices. Looking forward, when the Fall

enrollment is set, we can begin the discussion about positive changes that we can advocate for for 2017. He explained that by the fall, numbers are set, and then late in the fall things are done to accommodate for the capacity.

We have 18 weeks, and a lot of things can happen in that time period. We can come to an agreement as to what would be best for CIS as a whole. However, the enrollment policy has to change because we are not able to control capacity at the school. This should be the consistent message we send to APS- the enrollment policy must change. How it changes people disagree on, and there are many different scenarios it can take.

Someone mentioned that May 21st is the primary for candidates for Arlington County board- we can certainly speak to them to advocate for CIS. Our elevator pitch should be that the guaranteed enrollment policy must change.

A question was raised as to where we are in terms of losing classrooms. Jessica explained that we will have six kindergarten classrooms, as they received 175 applications for 144 slots- they currently have 30 applicants on the waitlist. This year they will look at every grade level to see if they can consolidate classrooms. They also welcome Spanish speaking students to the older grades.

Someone asked if they will get another science teacher because the numbers are so high. Jessica explained that they possibly may. However, they may not have their own classroom, as the teachers may push-in carts.

President: Amber Dungun

There have been some requests to hold PTA meetings at times other than Tuesday at 7 pm. The by-laws require this time, but they will hold a highlights meeting tomorrow morning at 7:45 am.

Currently, CIS is in Teacher Appreciation week. Some PTA fundraising goes towards small tokens of appreciation for all of our teachers. They just won Sugar Shack donuts/treats for teachers. On Friday, there will be a lunch for staff catered by District Taco. They get an hour to hang out and relax. In order for a teacher to be able to do this, they have to have parents come to the classroom.

On May 20th, from 6:30 to 8 pm, the Taste of Claremont will be held. It will show all of the opportunities and programs that we offer at Claremont, and to its families and students.

Melissa also mentioned the Chick Fil-A fundraising night – they will donate the funds to CIS. It will be held on May 16th. She also asked that everyone please donate books back if they have an ABS book. She has been diverting books into classrooms, and does not want to run out.

Principal's update: Jessica Panfil

CIS is currently in a three year SOL/reading pass rate. In 2013, they were assessing 162 students; this year 309 will be assessed. They still have an increasing number able to pass the reading assessment, and the goal is 80%.

Claremont was recently recognized for the Green Action award- they won for their actions towards the idle free zone.

The Student Council Association wants to address lunches. They collected information about lunches and what foods the kids want to have. They then met with APS staff that oversees school lunches.

Coming up is Bike/Walk to school day, as well as the 3rd grade math class for families on May 11th from 8:00-9:00 am.

Jessica was recently published in the American Academy of Arts & Science where she wrote about the challenges of leading an immersion school.

Finally, 350 adults came to museum night- there was a great turnout, and everyone wrote a word on the word wall.